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FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 7345
INFO RUEHXR/RWANDA COLLECTIVE
RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE
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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 000021

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SENSITIVE

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [PHUM](#) [PREF](#) [KPKO](#) [CG](#)

SUBJECT: Goma Report January 9, 2008 -- fourth day of
Kivus Conference; Kamerhe, CNDP perspectives

1. (SBU) Summary: Vital Kamerhe, speaking to international observers, said that the Kivus Conference, which picked up in pace January 9, would operate at two levels, with the real work taking place in side discussions with the armed groups (especially CNDP). It was essential that the Conference focus on producing a timetable, by which the ceasefire would lead to brassage. In a separate meeting, the CNDP delegation set forth many conditions (security for Tutsis, dealing with FDLR, amnesty, return of refugees, security sector reform, eliminating Mai Mai); the international observers urged CNDP to concentrate on goals achievable in the immediate term, i.e., at the Conference. End Summary.

2. (SBU) The Kivus Conference held its first, abbreviated substantive plenary on the afternoon of January 9, mainly with uncontroversial speeches by ministers. Over 500 members had been accredited at opening of day, thanks to a hugely simplified process. A full plenary commences January 10. The Conference is now scheduled to conclude on January 17.

International observers meet with Kamerhe

3. (SBU) International observers, led by EU Special Envoy Roeland van de Geer, African Union Special Envoy Pierre Yere, Belgian Special Envoy Jozef Smets and MONUC's political chief Christian Manahl, had an early meeting January 9 with the Conference's Number Two Vital Kamerhe, President of the National Assembly, president of the Conference's Committee of Elders ("Comite des Sages"), and Conference spokesman. Kamerhe said that the Conference was "doable" -- i.e., a real success was achievable. The Congolese were "capable of surprising you" -- they could, he said, make a huge advance in short order, or dally for a year. The Kivus Conference was significantly more manageable than Sun City had been, in his view.

4. (SBU) Kamerhe said that the real work of the Conference would involve the armed groups, particularly CNDP. He saw therein a primary role for his own Wise Men's Committee. The plenaries would be for setting the mood and consecrating decisions made in smaller circles. The key would be to produce a concrete plan and timetable, something that the wider Conference and general populace -- hungry for any sign of progress toward ending war -- could latch on to and not despair, afterwards, that the Conference had been a waste of time. Kamerhe commented that he had for a long time hoped for the ascendancy of a political over a military mindset, and the Conference represented that golden opportunity.

5. (SBU) Smets pressed Kamerhe for the Government to extend the ceasefire to several months. Kamerhe said that that would be a good thing, but it would have to be linked with a concrete timetable for sending troops into brassage. He emphasized the importance of DRC's

resuming diplomatic relations with Rwanda as soon as possible ("to delay resupply of Nkunda"). He said that it was hard for him to see Nkunda's being reconstituted as a general in the FARDC. There had been much call in the pre-Conference for including FDLR in the Conference but the decision had been made to keep contacts with FDLR indirect, he said.

Also meet with CNDP delegation

16. (SBU) The international observers had a long meeting with the CNDP delegation of 12, transported by MONUC to the Karibou Hotel. AU Special Envoy Yere, noting that this was AU's first encounter with CNDP, excoriated CNDP as a rogue armed group undermining a democratic state, and described CNDP's position as politically and morally unacceptable. Van de Geer, Smets, and Manahl were more diplomatic but pushed the CNDP delegation on human rights violations, rape, and child soldiers, and urged it to support the Conference by formulating steps that would be immediately achievable.

17. (SBU) Four members of the CNDP delegation gave a smooth presentation, mainly centered on demands only achievable in the mid to long term, viz.: security for a Tutsi community which they claimed suffered discrimination and threat; removal of the FDLR; return of all Congolese refugees; amnesty for all CNDP members; suppression of the Mai Mai ("Congo's janjawid"); and thorough reconstitution of the armed forces. They admitted that CNDP had a "problem" with child soldiers, and claimed that CNDP soldiers were the "least" offender (after FDLR, Mai Mai, and FARDC) on sexual violence in North Kivu and other human-rights violations. They emphasized that the key issues of the Conference would have to be addressed outside plenary and expressed skepticism that President

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Kabila would abide by any recommendations of the Conference.

And with Refugee Representatives, Interior Minister

18. (SBU) The international observers later met representatives of the four Congolese refugee communities in Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, and Tanzania. The first three of these were Tutsis. The representative from Burundi spoke French; the representative from Rwanda spoke French but noted that the youth in the camp were only learning Kinyarwanda; the representative from Uganda spoke English; the representative from Tanzania spoke Swahili. In contrast to the claim, earlier in the day, by CNDP of there being over 500,000 Congolese refugees in the four countries, these refugee representatives gave the figure of just over 200,000 (Rwanda 47,000; Uganda 31,000; Burundi 28,000; Tanzania 96,000 -- the only one of the four to be decreasing at present). They all said that the refugees overwhelmingly wanted to be able to return to Congo and would like to do so quickly so as to be able to participate in local elections. However, they said that most of the refugees feared for their security on return and in many cases had no sense that they had land to which they could return, on which to live and farm. They said that the Congolese government had been laggard in establishing tripartite committees (refugees, DRC, host government) to deal with issues of return, particularly to include land tenure, security, and economic prospects. Smets and van de Geer urged these refugee representatives to seize the occasion of the Conference to give a clear public presentation on their legitimacy and needs.

19. (SBU) At the international observers' regular evening meeting, held with the Minister of State of the Interior in the place of Conference president Malu Malu, and with presidency foreign affairs advisor Chissambo, van de Geer and Smets urged them to assure that the refugee representatives would have ample opportunity to speak in plenary and that the DRC government would give priority to the tripartite committees. The Minister of State said he would fulfill both requests. He made the claim (false) that prior to 1994 there had been no problems in Congo (Zaire) between Tutsis and Hutus or vis-a-vis Tutsis generally. He also stated that the key problem on refugees was the "party manipulating the refugees" (i.e., Rwanda).

